



# News Release

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Contacts: [Gordon MacCracken](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

## **Prescription monitoring rules proposal aims to cut high rate of drug misuse**

*Hearing on rules proposal set for June 27*

**OLYMPIA** — Washington had the nation's sixth-highest rate of self-reported, non-medical use of prescription painkillers in 2007-2008. On June 27, the Washington State Department of Health will hold a hearing on rules aimed at helping to turn that around.

In an effort to identify and stop prescription drug misuse, state health officials are developing new rules for a prescription monitoring program. The rulemaking process includes a public hearing to take comments on the proposal. The hearing is set for 1:30 p.m. June 27 in Tumwater.

The prescription drug monitoring program authorized by the 2007 legislature included one year of funding to get started. The project was suspended in December 2008 before it actually began, due to a subsequent lack of funding. In 2010, two federal grants supporting this patient safety initiative were awarded and the work has resumed. The program collects records for all controlled substances from practitioners and pharmacies that dispense these medications.

Controlled substances are drugs regulated by federal and state law because of their potential for abuse and diversion.

Medical providers and pharmacists use the collected information as a tool in patient care. The program provides practitioners a source of more information before they prescribe or dispense medications. Other groups, including law enforcement and health professional licensing boards, will be able to request information to help prevent misuse, fraud, and diversion.

Prescription drug misuse is a national and local problem. It's caused an alarming growth in overdose deaths, hospitalizations, admissions for substance abuse, and other non-medical use. In Washington, deaths involving unintentional prescription pain reliever overdoses increased nearly 21-fold from 24 in 1995 to 490 in 2009. In the past decade, the numbers of hospitalizations for prescription pain reliever dependence and abuse have doubled, hospitalizations for methadone

poisoning have increased five-fold, and poisoning hospitalizations from other prescription pain relievers have increased four-fold.

The hearing will be held in rooms 152 and 153 of the Department of Health's Point Plaza East building, 310 Israel Road S.E., Tumwater. [Directions to the building](#) are available online ([www.doh.wa.gov/DOHDirections/PointPlaza.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/DOHDirections/PointPlaza.htm)).

People who cannot attend the hearing to provide comments can [submit them by email](#) ([prescriptionmonitoring@doh.wa.gov](mailto:prescriptionmonitoring@doh.wa.gov)) or [on the agency website](#) ([fortress.wa.gov/doh/policyreview/](http://fortress.wa.gov/doh/policyreview/)).

The [Prescription Monitoring Program website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/PMP/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/PMP/default.htm)) has details.

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